

## **LGBCE (17)7th Meeting**

Minutes of meeting held on Tuesday 18 July 2017, 29<sup>th</sup> Floor, Millbank Tower,  
Millbank, London, SW1P 4QP

### **Commissioners Present**

Professor Colin Mellors OBE (Chair)  
Sir Tony Redmond (Deputy Chair)  
Dr Peter Knight CBE, DL  
Alison Lowton

### **LGBCE Officers Present:**

Jolyon Jackson CBE	Chief Executive
Lynn Ingram	Director of Finance & Resources
Richard Buck	Review Manager
Jo Porter	Review Manager
Lucy Dunkeyson	Review Manager
Mishka Mayers	Review Officer (item 2)
Dean Faccini	Business Support Officer (minutes)

## **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies had been received from Peter Maddison and Alison Evison, Review and Programme Manager.

## **Declarations of interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

## **Minutes of LGBCE's meeting on 20 June 2017**

The minutes were agreed as a correct record, and were signed by the Chair.

## **Matters Arising**

A question was asked on the Commissioner recruitment process. The Chair indicated that he would request an update at his meeting with the Department for

Communities and Local Government (DCLG) later that day. It was agreed that once the new Commissioners were appointed, a workshop between all Commissioners would take place.

## 1. Operational Report - LGBCE (17)75

The Chief Executive presented the Operational Report for July and the Commission noted its content.

An update was given on the Commission's capacity to conduct further reviews. Two further authorities have expressed a possible interest in requesting a review but only if it could be completed in time for the 2019 elections. The Chief Executive has advised both authorities of the need to make a prompt request so that the Commission had sufficient time to carry out the review.

The Chair and the Chief Executive had recently met with Dover District Council and Rugby Borough Council to discuss their requests for a review. The Commission agreed that Dover would be added to the programme. The Commission also agreed that Rugby would be added to the programme, subject to pursuing their intention to change their electoral cycle.

Eight authorities have yet to respond to the LGBCE's proposal for an electoral reviewed based on the Commission's intervention criteria. The Commission would consider the full list at its meeting in August when it would confirm which authorities should be added to the 2018/19 review programme.

DCLG are still deciding on how to proceed with requests from local authorities that wish to merge. There has been no further update from DCLG on the potential for new unitary authorities.

The Chief Executive will meet with the Chief Executive from the National Association of London Councils on 25 August.

The Chief Executive informed the Commission that a letter on the electoral review of Hull had been received from the Labour Leader at Hull City Council. This letter would be treated as a submission and taken into account once the current consultation is closed.

The Chief Executive informed the Commission that he had received a request to carry out a PABR from a resident in Surrey. The Commission agreed to continue with its current policy and would inform the applicant accordingly.

## 2. North Devon Council Size - LGBCE (17)76

It had been agreed to review North Devon Council due to electoral imbalance. According to the latest available electoral figures, 33 per cent of wards had variances greater than 10 per cent, with seven per cent of wards being over 20 per cent. One ward, Instow, has a variance of 26 per cent.

The current size of the Council is 43 members.

Following receipt of information about future governance and representational arrangements, it was recommended by LGBCE officers that there was sufficient evidence to support that the council size decrease by two from 43 to 41 members.

The Commission considered all the available evidence and, on the basis of this evidence, it was minded to support a council size of 41 members.

**Agreed**

The Commission agreed that a council size of 41 be used as the basis for the preparation of the Draft Recommendations.

### 3. Rutland Council Size - LGBCE (17)77

It had been agreed to review Rutland County Council due to electoral imbalance. According to the latest available electoral figures, 13 per cent of wards had variances greater than 10 per cent, with seven per cent of wards being over 20 per cent. One ward, Oakham North West, has a variance of 53 per cent.

The current size of the Council is 26 members.

Following receipt of information about future governance and representational arrangements, it was recommended by LGBCE officers that there was sufficient evidence to support that the council size remain at 26 members.

The Commission considered all the available evidence and, on the basis of this evidence, it was minded to support a council size of 26 members.

**Agreed**

The Commission agreed that a council size of 26 be used as the basis for the preparation of the Draft Recommendations.

### 4. Bath & North East Somerset Council Size - LGBCE (17)78

It had been agreed to review Bath & North East Somerset Council due to electoral imbalance. According to the latest available electoral figures, 24 per cent of wards/divisions had variances greater than 10 per cent. One ward, Peasedown, has a variance of 23 per cent, and another ward, Bathwick, has a variance of 22 per cent.

The current size of the Council is 65 members.

Following receipt of information about future governance and representational arrangements, it was recommended by LGBCE officers that there was sufficient evidence to support that the council size decrease by six from 65 to 59 members.

The Commission considered all the available evidence and, on the basis of this evidence, it was minded to support a council size of 59 members.

### **Agreed**

The Commission agreed that a council size of 59 be used as the basis for the preparation of the Draft Recommendations.

## **5. Chair's Report**

The Chair provided a report of the Commission's involvement at the LGA conference in Birmingham. It was felt the Commission's presence had been extremely worthwhile as it enabled the Commission to establish contacts with representatives from local authorities and various local government groups.

Amongst other matters, the issue of coterminosity in district-wide reviews had been mentioned by a number of people. The desirability of single member wards in rural areas was another recurrent theme.

It was pleasing that one of the sessions had indicated the positive impact that the Commission's electoral review had had on governance in Doncaster MDC.

The Chair had met with the District Council's Network (DCN) and the County Councils Network (CCN) and would be arranging follow-up appointments with both groups, individually, as well as arranging a meeting with the President of Solace Group.

## **6. Chief Executive's Report**

The Chief Executive had nothing further to add.

## **7. London Boroughs: engagement – LGBCE (17)79**

The Strategy and Communications Director presented a strategic paper on how the Commission might engage with high-level stakeholders during the forthcoming London borough reviews.

In summarising the paper, it was noted that London presented a number of risks and opportunities for the way the Commission engaged with local authorities and other interested stakeholders. Care would need to be taken to be sensitive to the sequencing of reviews and the fact that many boroughs relied on shared services.

Key points included:

- The desirability of early engagement with London local government, representative bodies and stakeholders in advance of a review starting.
- The use of local authority umbrella groups.

- The Commission is currently reviewing its consultation process which, when completed, will provide an opportunity to introduce improvements to the review process.
- The existing consultation guidance, branding, and associated products are in the process of being updated, which means London will be the first opportunity for the Commission to try out this new material.

### **Agreed**

The Commission noted the strategy outlined in the paper.

## **8. Electoral review of Manchester – response to complaint – LGBCE (17)80**

The Commission considered in detail the complaint that had been made by eight local organisations in Moss Side and Rusholme in respect of the electoral review of Manchester. In doing so, they had access to: a cover paper by LGBCE officers, the complaint, the measures undertaken by the team to publicise the Manchester review, and a description of related activities undertaken by Manchester City Council into promote information about the review.

Officers described the measures that had been taken to publicise the review and noted that these were consistent with other reviews undertaken by the Commission.

It was also noted that information about the review could be accessed via the Rusholme and Fallowfield Civic Society website, one of the signatories to the complaint.

On the basis of the information presented, the Commission concluded that, despite the modest level of participation, reasonable and sufficient steps had been taken both to publicise the review and to facilitate representations at each stage of the process. The timetable for recommendations was also made clear and all representations made within that timescale had been taken into account. Accordingly, the Commission had discharged its statutory obligations and believed that individual areas of the city had not been disadvantaged.

Since the Commission was of the view it had complied with its statutory duties, a further period of consultation would be inappropriate.

The Commission also considered whether it should, as requested by the complainants, delay laying the order until all stages of the complaints process and, potentially, an investigation by the Parliamentary Commissioner had been exhausted. However, laying the order would not preclude complainants from pursuing their case and the order itself would be subject to normal parliamentary processes.

The Chief Executive was asked to notify the complainants of the decision and, within one week, explain more fully the reasoning behind the decision in line with the formal complaints process.

Separately, it was noted that the Commission had already agreed to enhance its consultation process and officers were asked to consider whether any further lessons might be learned from the Manchester review.

#### **9. Director of Finance and Resources Report - Quarter 1 Performance Indicators - Finance and non-Finance for 2017/18 – LGBCE (17)81**

The Finance & Resources Director introduced the detailed budget setting for 2017/18 and the Quarter 1 Financial Projections.

The Commission laid its main estimate at the end of April 2017. For the 2018/19 financial year, the Commission will be asked to provisionally approve the budget in December / January before the main estimate is approved

The budget had been built using the Commission's budget methodology, which had been discussed through the Audit and Risk Committee.

##### **Detailed budget setting**

- There will be a capital switch of £80,000 to finance the SharePoint project. This, along with £50,000 allocated to the Commission's website development project, will form the basis of the Commission's capital expenditure for 2017/18. A Supplementary Estimate will be required and will be laid when final figures are calculated towards the end of the financial year.
- An underspend of £46k has been projected following allocation from the 2017/18 revenue budget. This will be held as contingency.

##### **Quarter 1 projections**

- Based on the Commission's profile budget, actuals, and commitments, a small underspend of £8k has been projected.

##### **Agreed**

The Commission approved the budget for 2017/18 and noted the projection for the year.

#### **10. Audit and Risk Committee June Minutes – LGBCE (17)82**

The Commission noted the minutes of the June Audit & Risk Committee meeting.

#### **11. Agree to a Process of Approving Corporate Policies - LGBCE (17)83**

The Director of Finance and Resources presented a paper which outlined the Commission's process of reviewing and approving corporate policies. In drawing up

the process, the Director of Finance and Resources identified the following guidelines:

- The Commission has overall responsibility for all of its policies.
- The role of the Chief Executive and OMT is to implement agreed policies.
- The role of the Audit and Risk Committee (A&RC), and in some cases, the Remuneration Committee, is to review and, where appropriate, challenge the effectiveness of corporate policies, drawing attention to any deficiencies in either scope or implementation.
- Any process to review corporate policies should be simple and proportionate. Where the need for changes in policy are identified, as opposed to the means of implementation, these should be brought to the Commission for approval.

The Director of Finance and Resources had also compared the process of reviewing corporate policies with similar organisations in preparation for this paper.

The Commission considered the paper and agreed:

- The Commission is responsible for approval all of its policies.
- Both the A&RC and the Remuneration Committee have important roles in reviewing the implementation of policies, highlighting the need for change in ensuring their effective implementation, identifying gaps in policies and if they no longer remained fit for purpose.

#### **Agreed**

The above principles be endorsed and the Director of Finance and Resources, working with the Chair of A&RC Committee, would bring forward a schedule for the periodic review of policies.

## **12. Future Business – LGBCE (1684**

The Commission agreed to the following changes:

- A revised meeting time (11.30) for the August Commission meeting was agreed.
- The Lead Commission/staff responsibilities paper would be removed from the August agenda and moved to a future Commission meeting.
- The Council size discussion output paper is to be removed from the August agenda and discussed at the policy workshop on 18 September.

#### **AOB**

There were no matters raised under AOB.

**Close of Business 4pm**

